



**CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF  
TRANSPORTATION  
NEWS RELEASE**

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**FOR RELEASE:** *April 8, 2010*

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**Hartford, East Hartford, West Hartford and Connecticut State  
Police Launch First Enforcement Crackdown to Stop  
Distracted Driving**

***Hartford-area Cities Cracking Down on All Drivers in an Effort to  
Increase Driver Awareness and Save Lives***

[Hartford, Connecticut] – Hartford area drivers beware; the police departments of Hartford, East Hartford, West Hartford and the Connecticut State Police will be out in force beginning April 10, to make sure drivers keep their eyes on the road and hands on the wheel during the city's first official distracted driving crackdown. Law enforcement officers will be sending the strong message that anyone caught texting or talking on a hand-held cell phone will be pulled over and ticketed.

Connecticut law restricts the use of hand-held electronic mobile devices while operating a motor vehicle. Drivers eighteen years of age and older must use a hands-free accessory, and drivers under eighteen are strictly forbidden from using any form of hand held mobile electronic device or hands frees accessory while driving.

"We want to let people know we are serious about stopping this deadly behavior," said Hartford Police Chief Daryl K. Roberts. "Too many people believe that just being on a cell phone can't and won't contribute to causing a serious car crash, but these tragedies can and do happen all the time."

In 2008 alone, nearly 6,000 people were killed and more than a half million people were injured in crashes involving a distracted driver nationwide. Additionally, in 2008, almost 20 percent of all crashes in the year involved some type of distraction.

The reality is that distracted driving is an epidemic that also affects us right here in the Hartford area. Since October, 2005 almost 117,000 cell phone and distracted driving

citations have been issued in CT by State and local police (Source: CT Central Infractions Bureau).

“No phone call is worth the risk of a ticket or worse...your life,” said East Hartford Police Chief Mark J. Sirois “When you take your eyes or your mind off the road or your hands off the wheel, you make it unsafe for everyone.”

“These numbers may seem like just statistics, but we know that even one life lost is too many,” said West Hartford Police Chief James J. Strillacci. “Too often we bring the tragic news to families about the death of a loved one that may have been prevented had someone been paying attention to the road instead of their phone.”

That’s why the police departments of Hartford, East Hartford, West Hartford and the Connecticut State Police are joining with the U.S. Department of Transportation to launch one of the nation’s first crackdown campaigns aimed at stopping distracted drivers. Stepped-up law enforcement activities will be cracking down on distracted drivers throughout mid-April.

Additionally, residents of the Hartford area can expect to see the Nation’s first distracted driving television, radio and online media campaign supporting law enforcement. The *PHONE IN ONE HAND. TICKET IN THE OTHER.* campaign will debut in early April and is another critical piece to this crackdown. “The new ads will be used to raise awareness about this deadly practice and remind drivers to keep their eyes on the road and hands on the wheel,” said Connecticut State Police Colonel Thomas Davoren.

There is heightened concern about the risk of texting and talking while driving because they combine three types of distraction – visual, taking your eyes off the road; manual, taking your hands off the wheel; and cognitive, taking your mind off the road.

“While many drivers don’t realize the true dangers of using a cell phone while driving, according to a recent study from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, drivers who use hand-held devices are four times as likely to get into crashes serious enough to injure themselves,” explained Governor Rell’s Highway Safety Representative, Robbin Cabelus of the Connecticut Department of Transportation.

“So remember, if you are caught talking on a hand-held phone or texting, law enforcement WILL pull you over and you will be fined. No more excuses, no more exceptions, *PHONE IN ONE HAND. TICKET IN THE OTHER,*” reminded Cabelus.

For more information, please visit [www.distraction.gov/hartford](http://www.distraction.gov/hartford).

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